Sample Responses to Narrative Questions for Online SES Application

The following sample responses to the narrative portion of the Supplemental Educational Services (SES) electronic application are compiled from a variety of sources, including applications from approved SES providers. Sample responses are in blue text. These responses are formatted per the restrictions of the online application. These restrictions are as follow:

No bulleted lists
No paragraph separations
No bold or italics
No more than one space between any character

EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS – PART A

Describe your previous experience in raising the achievement levels of students. If you have not provided tutoring or teaching services in the past, describe relevant experience you have that suggests you will be effective as a provider of supplemental educational services. *Please limit response to 2,000 characters, including spaces and punctuation.*

Prior to the creation of this program, I worked at an after-school tutoring program for at-risk, low-performing students in elementary, middle, and high school grades. Tutoring consisted of individual and small group services in reading, science, and mathematics to approximately 120 students, including students with special needs. According to teacher reports, outcomes for students in the program included the following: 78% of students completed their homework regularly; 82% of students improved their grades in reading; 51% of students improved their grades in science; 66% of students improved their grades in mathematics; 76% of children read more books; and 56% of persistently truant students improved their attendance rates. Students completing the program consistently achieve an average grade level gain of 1.2 years in reading and 1.7 year in math. Additionally, parents reported the following positive outcomes for their children: children were not afraid to ask questions and ask for help on homework; children enjoyed their time at school and their school work more; and children enjoyed reading more. These experiences in working to improve the achievement levels of at-risk students suggest that my program will provide effective services to students eligible for supplemental educational services.

EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS – PART B

Describe how you will ensure that your services will be consistent with the instructional program(s) of the school in which the student is enrolled. *Please limit response to 2,000 characters, including spaces and punctuation.*

This program will ensure that the services we provide to students will be consistent with the instructional program of the school in which the student is currently enrolled by working closely with the district, individual schools, and students' teachers to learn more about the school's instructional program. As I anticipate working mostly in the Milwaukee Public Schools, I have begun to familiarize myself with the MPS Learning Targets. As students begin to enroll in the program, more contact will be made with the schools and teachers as well. Once the school year begins, I will make initial contact with district and school representatives to share information about our program's curriculum and instruction as well as to learn about district and school instruction. Following these initial conversations, our program tutors will be in monthly contact (via e-mail, mail, fax, or phone) with classroom teachers and other school personnel to learn about specifics of each student's day school instruction. When possible, tutors will observe at specific schools to learn about the curriculum and instructional practices of the school. Information gathered during monthly communication with teachers, as well as information gathered during observations, will be shared at monthly staff meetings to ensure continued consistency.

EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS – PART C

Describe how the curriculum you will use is aligned with EACH of the six Wisconsin model academic standards for English/Language Arts. *For a list of the six English/Language Arts Academic Standards, click on the help button above. Please limit response to 2,000 characters, including spaces and punctuation.*

A: Reading and Literature: Our program includes instruction for students in reading different genres. Instruction focuses on strategies for comprehension including self-monitoring and identifying main ideas. Instruction for more advanced students includes analyzing text for literary devices, themes, and purpose; students evaluate these texts to develop opinions on personal, social, and global topics. B: Writing: Our writing curriculum focuses on writing with purpose – to persuade, inform, and entertain – to a specific audience. Students learn the writing process, including drafting, editing, and publishing work. Focus is placed on writing grammatically-correct, thorough, essays narratives, directions and reports. C: Oral Language: Students learn about the importance of eye contact, tone, and articulation when voicing opinions and ideas. Discussion and debate are encouraged as a way to allow students to develop oral communication skills. D: Language: To teach students how to relate to others in different social, cultural, and professional settings, the difference between Standard English and colloquial language is stressed. Vocabulary and idiomatic expressions are stressed for elementary level students, while advanced students learn to use language to identify and evaluate meaning in both written and oral communication. E: Media and Technology: Though our program currently has limited access to technology, our curriculum stresses critical thinking skills in relation to media messages and advertising. Additionally, readings and discussion focus on the far-reaching effects of the use of technology and media on our society. F: Research and Inquiry: Our program's curriculum allows students to develop questions of interest, to identify materials from which to gather relevant information, and to analyze the value of different sources in addressing research topics. Students also focus on research mechanics such as note-taking and organization of information.

EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS – PART D

Describe how the curriculum you will use is aligned with EACH of the six Wisconsin model academic standards for Mathematics. *For a list of the six Mathematics Academic Standards, click on the help button above. Please limit response to 2,000 characters, including spaces and punctuation.*

A: Mathematical Processes: Our program focuses on connecting math with real life experiences. Students learn to use charts, graphs, and maps to connect math with current events and personal experience. Basic level students focus on math vocabulary and notation, while more advanced students use reasoning to form logical arguments to solve mathematical problems. B: Number Operations and Relationships: Elementary students work to reinforce computational skills and to understand number relationships through work with fractions, decimals, and estimation. More advanced students reinforce relationships between numbers through work with roots, powers, and ratios. C: Geometry: Identifying the properties and parts of two and three dimensional figures (circle, rhombus, cylinder, etc.) and understanding slope, parallelism, and perpendicularity make up the base of our program in geometry. Additional emphasis is placed on visualization and spatial reasoning. D: Measurement: Students learn how to accurately measure, interpret, and recognize units of measurement including length, time, weight, temperature, and angle size. Advanced students work with metric conversions, estimations of measurement, and more advanced measurement including speed and density. E: Stats and Probability: Our program helps students work with data to predict outcomes, make conclusions, and derive medians and modes. Students also learn how to communicate information using data through the creation of graphs, tables, scatter plots, and line plots. F: Algebraic Relationships: Our program works to help students understand patterns, relations, and functions to solve linear equations. Students also work with linear and non-linear equations to understand and represent concepts to analyze change such as slope and rate of change, as well as to understand graphic representations of these concepts in the real world.

EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS – PART E

Describe the tutoring services to be provided. Address how instructional methods will be high quality, research-based, and specifically designed to increase student proficiency in reading and/or math. *Please limit response to 2,000 characters, including spaces and punctuation.*

Tutoring services include small group (3:1) or 1:1 instruction. The research base for our mathematics program comes from the National Council of Teacher's of Mathematics *Principals and Standards*, which emphasizes the importance of basing mathematics instruction not just upon mastery of skills, but also upon understanding the concepts behind those skills. As such, instruction in our program teaches students not just skills memorization but other activities such as real world modeling, problem-solving, and how to assess their own learning and understanding of math concepts. Use of graphs, charts, manipulatives, and discussions/journaling surrounding math concepts help students to analyze and understand (rather than just memorize) mathematical concepts. Research for our reading instruction is based on Ellin Oliver Keene and Susan Zimmerman's "Mosaic of Thought," which focuses on providing students with the cognitive skills that "good readers" use to comprehend text. Instruction is based on the book's six strategies: activating prior knowledge, determining most important ideas/themes, asking questions, creating visual and other sensory images from text, drawing inferences, synthesizing what's read, and solving reading problems. In addition to learning these six strategies, students receive instruction on various ways to employ these methods for increasing comprehension.

EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS – PART F

Provide a description of the qualifications required of your instructors. *Please limit response to 2,000 characters, including spaces and punctuation.*

Our program seeks to hire individuals with the following qualifications: Passion for teaching children; Teaching certification or other suitable background; Record of successful teaching relationships with at-risk students; Competency in reading and math skills at the appropriate grade level(s); References demonstrating dependability, punctuality, patience, and aptitude for working with children; Must pass criminal background checks. Once tutors are hired, they undergo an initial 12-hour training to familiarize the tutors with 1) the curriculum and instructional practices of the program (as outlined in Parts C, D, & E of this application); 2) the logistical aspects of the program (testing, progress reporting, communication with parents and teachers, etc.); and 3) cultural diversity and sensitivity issues. In addition to the initial training, tutors receive additional training in our monthly meetings, based upon tutor feedback and students' greatest areas of need. These professional development sessions will be 90 minutes in duration and may include such topics as: working with English Language Learners, using meta-cognitive strategies to increase reading comprehension, and/or using manipulatives to improve student understanding of mathematics concepts. Tutors are also observed bi-monthly to make certain they are utilizing the program's curriculum and instructional practices to ensure maximum gains in each student's academic progress. Tutors who do not meet expectations will be provided with additional training and a mentor teacher.

EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS – PART G
Describe how you will provide ongoing communication with students' teachers and parents to keep them informed of the progress the student is making. *Please limit response to 2,000 characters, including spaces and punctuation.*

The school teaching staff and parents will receive progress reports on each student's progress in each of his or her identified learning goals on a monthly basis via mail. The progress report will detail individual student's accomplishments and continued areas for improvement based on each student's individualized achievement plan (IAP). The progress report provides e-mail, phone, and address contact information so our tutoring staff can field questions from parents and the student's day school teacher(s). Additionally, progress reports and other communication will be translated into Spanish for parents with limited English language. Parents who speak languages other than English or Spanish will be given all available accommodations as well. In addition to the monthly progress reports, tutors will make at least one phone call mid-way through the program to notify parents and teachers of student progress. (Tutors also are encouraged to make phone calls on an as-needed basis.) Phone calls will include information regarding student progress, as well as concerns the tutor may have in the student's continued areas of need. The phone call also will seek to gain feedback from the student's teacher regarding student progress and areas of concern for the classroom teacher; tutors will also address parent's questions and concerns. All communication to teachers and parents will be recorded on a communication log kept for each student. This log will include information regarding information provided by the tutor and input received from teachers and parents. When necessary, teacher and parent input will be used to modify the IAP and instructional programs of the students.

EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS – PART H
Describe the specific processes you use to 1) assess student needs, 2) develop an individualized academic program that addresses each student's needs, and 3) monitor and evaluate student progress on a continuous basis. Your answer should address each of the three areas listed in the question. *Please limit response to 2,000 characters, including spaces and punctuation.*

Students are given a pre-test in both reading and mathematics to assess their areas of need in each subject area. This pre-test was designed by tutors in our program, and it is based upon Wisconsin content standards and the Milwaukee Public Schools Learning Targets. We have developed tests for all grade levels; samples of these tests will be sent with the required paper documents. A student's area of need is identified by scoring below 60% proficiency in one or more of the content standards for these subject areas. Based upon these areas of need, our tutors develop an individualized academic program (IAP) for each student, with input from the parent and day school classroom teacher(s). This IAP is then used to design a sequence of lessons from our program's curriculum, targeted at the student's specific needs. In order to assess progress on the identified goals for the IAP, students are given monthly "mini-assessments" in their areas of need to diagnose progress and to identify continued deficits in the student's learning in relation to each IAP goal. Tutors are provided with training on how to conduct and score these assessments. They are also responsible for reporting this information to parents and classroom teachers through our progress reporting form. When necessary, tutors are provided with supplemental lessons for areas in which students continue to struggle to reach IAP goals. Tutors also are asked to make special attempts to connect with classroom teachers to discuss the needs of students who are struggling. Finally, our program seeks to identify areas of need that affect large numbers of our students, so that we can provide additional instruction in these areas. We are in constant search for best practices to ensure that our students' needs are being met.